Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

Vindications [*Rettungen*] of Horace

[587] *Quem rodunt omnes* [Whom all gnaw upon] – –

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Horat. Lib. I. Sat. 6.[587] [Horace, Book I, Satire 6]

These Vindications [*Rettungen*] of Horace will be entirely distinct from those which I recently had to undertake against an old schoolboy.

His petty, malicious spite [*hämische Bosheit*] almost frightened me off a little, and I shall not so soon tangle with writers of his like again. They are accustomed to pasquinade-making [*Pasquillmachen*], so that it becomes far easier for them to snatch a calumny [*Verleumdung*] out of thin air than to cite a rule from Donatus. But who, then, likes to be calumniated?

The gift [*Gabe*] of allowing oneself to be contradicted is indeed, on the whole, a gift that among the learned only the dead possess. Now I do not mean to present it as so important that one should wish to have died in order to possess it: for at this price, perhaps even greater perfections are too dear. I only mean to say that it would be very good if living scholars, too, would always learn in advance to be a little dead. Ultimately, they must, after all, leave behind a posterity [*Nachwelt*] that separates everything accidental from their fame, and which no reverence will hold back from laughing over their errors. Why, then, will they not even now learn to endure this posterity, which announces itself here and there in someone to whom it is all the same whether they hold him to be envious or unmannered [*ungesittet*]?

Posterity will never be unjust. At first, to be sure, it propagates praise and blame as it receives them; gradually, however, it brings both to their proper point. To be held for a great spirit [*großer Geist*] during one's lifetime, and a half century after death, is a poor proof that one is such; but to be held as such through all centuries is an incontrovertible one. Precisely the same holds for the opposite. A writer is not read by his contemporaries and by their grandchildren; a misfortune,

but no proof against his quality [*Güte*]; only when the grandchildren's grandchildren never acquire the desire to read him—then it is certain that he never deserved to be read.

Virtues and vices [*Tugenden und Laster*], too, posterity will not forever[591] mistake. I comprehend very well that the former can for a time be besmirched and the latter painted up; but that they should always remain so, the Wisdom which has ordered the connection of all things does not permit me to believe, and of which I find adorable traces even in that which depends upon the obstinacy of mortals.

From time to time, it awakens people who make it a pleasure for themselves to set their brow against prejudices [*Vorurteilen*], and to show everything in its true shape, even if a supposed saint should thereby become a villain, and a supposed villain a saint. I myself – – for I too, in regard to those who have preceded me, am a part of posterity, even if it were only a trillionth particle – – I myself can make for myself no more pleasant occupation than to muster the names of famous men, to examine their right to eternity, to wipe off undeserved spots [*unverdiente Flecken*] from them, to dissolve the false spacklings [*falschen Verkleisterungen*] of their weaknesses—in short, to do everything in a moral sense that he who is entrusted with the oversight of a picture gallery [*Aufsicht über einen Bildersaal*] performs physically.

Such a one will commonly have among the crowd some paintings that he loves so exceptionally that he does not willingly let a speck of sun-dust sit upon them. I remain, then, in the comparison, and say that I too revere some great spirits so much that, with my will, not the very least calumny shall stick to them.

Horace is one of these. And how should he not be? He, the philosophical poet [*philosophische Dichter*], who brought wit and reason into a more than sisterly bond, and with the subtlety of a courtier knew how to give the most earnest teachings of wisdom the supple manner of friendly reminders, committing them to enchanting harmonies in order to make their entry into the heart all the more infallible.

These praises, to be sure, no one has contested him, and they are not those which I wish here to consolidate against anyone. Envy would make itself ridiculous if it wished to diminish decided merits; it turns its attacks,[592] like a sly besieger,

against those sides which it sees without defense; to him from whom it cannot contest the great spirit, it gives vicious morals, and to him to whom it must leave virtue, it leaves it and turns him instead into a simpleton [*Blödsinnigen*].

Already long ago I noticed with the bitterest vexation that from these very machinations [*Ränken*] the posthumous fame [*Nachruhm*] of Horace has not escaped. As much as he has gained on the side of the poet, so much has he lost on the side of the honest man. Yes, say they, he sang the tenderest and neatest songs, but no one was more voluptuous [*wollüstiger*] than he; he praised bravery to the point of rapture, and was himself the most faint-hearted fugitive; he had the most sublime concepts of the Deity, but he himself was its sleepiest worshiper.

Scholars enough have been found who have carefully investigated his history and brought together a thousand trifles that are meant to serve for the understanding of his writings. They have delivered whole chronologies of them to us, they have investigated all doubtful readings; only those accusations have they left uninvestigated. And why then? Did they perhaps not wish to make a pagan altogether too worthy of veneration?

Me, at least, nothing shall hold back from showing the groundlessness [*Ungrund*] of these accusations, and making several remarks about them that are so natural that I must wonder why they have not been made long ago.

I will begin with his voluptuousness [*Wollust*]; or, as a recent writer expresses himself—who is not, however, the finest—with his stinking lust [*stinkenden Geilheit*] and immoderate lewdness [*unmäßigen Unzucht*].1 The proofs for this accusation are taken partly from his own writings, partly from the testimonies of others.

I will begin with the latter. All testimonies that can be hunted up concerning the voluptuous debauchery [*wollüstigen Ausschweifung*] of Horace flow from a single source whose sincerity is set as anything but beyond all doubt. Namely,[593] on an old manuscript of the Bodleian Library, a biography of Horace has been found, which almost all critics attribute, as is known, to Suetonius. If they had no other motives for this than the similarity of the style of writing [*Schreibart*], I would take the liberty of doubting their assertion. I know that styles of writing can be imitated; I know that it is a true impossibility to know all

the small peculiarities of a writer so precisely that one should discover the slightest lapse of them in his imitator; I know, finally, that to err quite easily in such conjectures, one needs to possess nothing but little taste and a great deal of pride, which, as they say, is precisely the case with most critics. Yet the scholiast Porphyrio cites a passage from this biography of Horace, and explicitly attributes it to Suetonius. Now this is already somewhat more, although also not everything. The couple of words he cites from it are quite well of the kind that could have stood in two different biographies. Yet I will not push my skepticism too far; Suetonius may be the author.

Suetonius, then, who in this biography brings together a hundred kinds of things that redound to Horace's praise, lets slip in—as if forced thereto by the love of truth—a passage that has been copied a thousand times, and often enough copied with a little tickle. Here it is: *Ad res venereas intemperantior traditur. Nam speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocunque respexisset, ibi ei imago coitus referretur.* [He is handed down as rather immoderate in matters of venus. For he is said to have had prostitutes arranged in a mirrored bedroom, so that wherever he looked, an image of intercourse was reflected back to him.]

What more does one want now? Suetonius is surely a credible writer; and Horace was surely enough of a poet to hold such a thing about him as entirely probable?

Let one not rush oneself, and at first at least be only as cautious as Suetonius himself wished to be. He says *traditur* [it is handed down], *dicitur* [it is said]. Two fine words, to which already many an honest man owes the loss of his good name! So the rumor has only gone thus? So people have only[594] said it? Truly, my dear Suetonius, I am very ill disposed toward you for chattering such worthlessnesses after others. In the hundred and more years that you lived after him, much could be invented that a historian like you ought to have investigated, but not propagated uninvestigated – –

It would sound a little disgusting if I wished to push this apostrophe further. I will therefore proceed more calmly – – In this very biography Suetonius says: there circulate under the name of Horace elegies and a prose letter; but both I hold to be false. The elegies are common, and the letter is obscure, which was not his fault at all. – – That is neat! Why does Suetonius contradict tradition here, and above with

the mirror room not? Does it matter more to rescue the spirit of a writer than his morals? Which insults more? After a crowd of the most perfect poems, to write several cold elegies and an obscure letter; or with all subtlety of taste to be an immoderate voluptuary? – – Impossible can I imagine to myself that a reasonable historian, on the very same page, in the very same matter—namely in reporting the ill reports to which his hero was exposed—could be equally incautious as cautious.

Not enough! I must go further, and ask the reader to consider the cited passage once again: *ad res venereas intemperantior traditur. Nam speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocunque respexisset, ibi ei imago coitus referretur.* [He is handed down as rather immoderate in matters of venus. For he is said to have had prostitutes arranged in a mirrored bedroom, so that wherever he looked, an image of intercourse was reflected back to him.]

The more I look at these words, the more they lose in my eyes their credibility. I find them absurd [*abgeschmackt*]; I find them un-Roman [*unrömisch*]; I find that they manifestly contradict other passages in this biography.

I find them absurd. Let one only hear whether the historian can have known what he wants? Horace is said to have been immoderate in venereal delights; for it is said – – Pay good attention to the cause! [595] It is said – Without doubt, that he, like a true garden-god, without choice, without taste, charged at everything that was of the female sex? No! – It is said he enjoyed his paramours in a mirror room, in order to meet on all sides where he looked the voluptuous image of his fortune – Nothing further? Where then lies the immoderation? I see, assuming the truth of this circumstance, nothing therein but an effort to make voluptuousness as charming to oneself as possible. The poet was thus none of those coarse people to whom rut and gallantry are one, and who in the dark make do with the satisfaction of a single sense. He wanted, as much as possible, to satisfy all of them; and without naming a champion, one can maintain that he will not have excluded the sense of smell from it either. At least he knew this stimulation:

*te puer in rosa

Perfusus liquidis urget odoribus.* [a boy drenched in liquid perfumes presses upon you on a bed of roses.]

And the ear? I credit him with tenderness enough that he will not have let this go empty either. Should the music even only have been

Gratus puellae risus [the pleasing laughter of a girl]

And the taste?

*oscula, quae Venus

Quinta parte sui nectaris imbuit.* [kisses which Venus has imbued with the fifth part of her nectar.]

Nectar, however, is said to have afforded the tongue no common tickle; at least Ibycus says in Athenaeus that it is nine times sweeter than honey – – Heaven! what a sensitive soul was the soul of Horace! It drew voluptuousness into itself through all entrances. – – And yet the mirror room is an improbability to me. Should an allusion to it never have slipped from the poet? In vain will one look around for this in his works. No, no; in the sweet embraces of a Chloe, one has the satisfaction of the eyes closer than that one would first have to seek it sideways in the mirror. Whom the original does not move,[596] will the shadow move him? – – I actually understand nothing of this; absolutely nothing. But here too everything must have its reason; and it would be a very wonderful law according to which the imagination worked, if the appearance could make more impression upon it than the essence – –

Further, I find the cited words un-Roman. Who will persuade me, for example, that the Romans said *speculatum cubiculum* [a spied-upon bedroom] for *cubiculum

speculis ornatum* [a bedroom adorned with mirrors]? Whether one gives the participle *speculatum* [spied-upon / observed] an active or passive meaning, it will express in the first case nothing at all, and in the second something entirely different. Already *speculari* [to spy out / observe] for *in dem Spiegel besehen* [to view in the mirror] is not the most customary, and no one other than a barbarian or a schoolboy can hit upon rendering the concept *mit Spiegeln ausgezieret* [adorned with mirrors] through *speculatus* [spied-upon]. But even if that were not so, tell me then what the whole turn of phrase means: *speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita* [he is said to have had prostitutes arranged in a mirrored bedroom]? I know well what *scorta deponere* [to lay down prostitutes] means in a certain student song, but what *scorta deponere* [to lay down prostitutes] could mean in a classical writer, I quite gladly confess not to know. The words are so obscure that one can guess the sense no otherwise than by conjecture; which, however, will not prove difficult to most, because a little malice runs along with it. When one has now guessed it, however, let one try whether it can well be compared with that which Suetonius otherwise relates of Horace?

According to the report of this historian, Augustus was so intimate with the poet that he often called him in jest *purissimum penem* [most pure member] and *homuncionem lepidissimum* [most charming little man]. The modest Pastor Lange renders the first epithet through *einen artigen Bruder Lüderlich* [a neat Brother Debauched]; or rather according to his spelling, *Liederlich*. I will hope that no more faithful translation will be required of me. Enough for me that *putissimus* [most pure], or if one wishes to have the reading a little more antique, *purissimus* [most pure], means the *Allerreinste* [the all-purest], and that he who is *ad res venereas intemperantior* [rather immoderate in matters of venus] cannot possibly be the all-purest. One of the two must therefore[597] alone be true; either the *dicitur* [it is said] of the rabble, or the explicit judgment of Augustus. With which will one hold?

The choice cannot fall hard; rather, every impartial person will concede to me that Suetonius could hardily have written something so absurd, so un-Roman, and so conflicting with his other reports, and that one is fully entitled to hold the cited passage to be interpolated [*untergeschoben*].

As far as the un-Roman in it is concerned, to be sure, one could perhaps use the pretext of a mutilated reading against me, and shift all guilt onto the ignorant copyists. It is true; and I myself can supply an emendation that is so unforced that one will accept it without contradiction. Namely, instead of: *speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita* [he is said to have had prostitutes arranged in a mirrored bedroom], I advise reading *specula in cubiculo scortans ita dicitur habuisse disposita, ut etc.* [whoring in his bedroom, he is said to have had mirrors so arranged that etc.]. One sees that I am at least very sincere, and make no hesitation to weaken my own ground. Yet who knows whether I would do it if I did not trust the remaining grounds all the more. But I believe they are of the constitution that what I still wish to add will make them almost incontrovertible.

I had not pondered long over this suspicious accusation when I remembered reading something similar in Seneca. This honest philosopher did not gladly miss an opportunity where he could, with good manner, make his earnest teachings more lively with a trait from history. In the first book of his *Natural Questions* [*natürlichen Fragen*], he treats among other things of mirrors, and after he has brought together everything that he as a physicist knew to say of them, he finally closes with a narrative that is fairly filthy. Perhaps I should say more than *fairly*; at least I am not the only one who blames a Stoic sage for having displayed it with all the pointed beauties of his Laconic wit.

Fromondus adds already: *honestius tacuisses Seneca* [more honorably you would have kept silent, Seneca]; and there are translators who prefer to mutilate their original text here,[598] rather than through all too great fidelity drive the blush into their readers' faces. I would be just as cautious if, unfortunately, almost the whole vindication [*Rettung*] of my poet did not depend upon it. To the benefit of innocence, one can open the mouth a little wider. I shall in all this still be far more modest than Seneca, whom those who wish to be more thoroughly informed can read in the sixteenth chapter of the cited book.

"On this occasion," he says to his Lucilius, "I must after all tell you a little story from which you will recognize how lust [*Geilheit*] despises not even an instrument for the stimulation of voluptuousness [*Wollust*], and how ingenious it is to create nourishment for its unchaste fire. A certain Hostius surpassed in unchastity everything that has ever been seen and abhorred upon the stage. He was

besides a rich miser, a slave-owner of more than a thousand sesterces. When his slaves had killed him, the divine Augustus did not deem him worthy to avenge his death, although he did not approve it. He defiled himself not alone with one sex; but he was as raving for the male as for the female. He had mirrors made for himself which, as I have described them in the preceding, enlarged the images by much, and made the finger equal in thickness and length to an arm. These mirrors he placed so that when he allowed himself to be abused by one of his sex, he could see all the movements of his violator therein, and rejoice in the false size of the member, as if in a true one. To be sure, he already sought out in all the bathhouses the models according to the enlarged scale; nevertheless, however, he had to satisfy his insatiable rut with lies as well. Now let one tell me whether it is true that the mirror was invented only for the sake of cleanliness?" –

Further I do not need to translate my Stoic. He moralizes a considerable corner further into the field, and gives himself all trouble to fix the eyes of his readers right firmly upon this object. One should swear he speaks of the voluntary death of Cato, so fiery does he become thereby![599]

I will turn rather directly to the conclusions that flow therefrom. The divine Augustus, who here abhors an unchaste man so much that he will not avenge even his death upon the most worthless creatures in the eyes of a Roman—upon murderous slaves—is the very same Augustus whose darling Horace was. Now, to be sure, one does not paint Horace to us fully as a Hostius; yet that which is lacking thereto is also not so great that it could have made so noticeable a difference in the conduct of Augustus. Among the *scortis* [prostitutes] that the poet is said to have enjoyed before the mirror, one does not wish to understand merely female ones, whose use pretty much presupposes the dispensability of supernatural incitements. One must include the male sex thereunder, if the *intemperantior ad res venereas traditur* [he is handed down as rather immoderate in matters of venus] is not, as I have already shown, to be an absurdity. But if one includes it thereunder, Hostius is superior to Horace only in small circumstances; and their main crime is one. It is one, I say; and Augustus must have been of very wavering principles. What could drive him to prosecute the very same vice in the one, and with the other to transform it into a joke, or rather even into a kind of praise? To declare the former *indignum vindicta* [unworthy of vengeance], and the latter *purissimum penem* [most pure member]? Let one not say that the

advantages which Horace otherwise possessed as a fine spirit [*schöner Geist*] could have moved Augustus to look past this abomination. Augustus was not the man who was accustomed to forgive all too coarse excesses in consideration of wit. At least he did not show it in a similar person, in Ovid.

Why should I make many words about so clear a matter? I believe I have prepared enough the critical conjecture [*kritische Vermutung*] that I now wish to bring forward. Let one consider that Hostius lived under Augustus; let one consider that the name Hostius has similarity enough with the name Horatius to be taken by an ignorant person for it; let one consider, finally, that the words of Seneca which I have already cited in translation: *specula ita disponebat ut* [600] *cum virum ipse pateretur, aversus omnes admissarii sui motus in speculo videret* [he so arranged mirrors that when he submitted to a man, turned away he might see all the movements of his stallion in the mirror]; that, I say, these words seem almost to be the model for those cited above: *specula in cubiculo, scortans ita dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocunque respexisset, ibi ei imago coitus referretur* [whoring in his bedroom, he is said to have had mirrors so arranged that wherever he looked, an image of intercourse was reflected back to him]; and when one has considered all this precisely, tell me then whether I could not maintain with a considerable degree of probability that the disputed passage of Suetonius is the interpolation [*Einschiebsel*] of a copyist? Of a copyist who perhaps had read in another author than Seneca that in the times of Augustus a certain Hostius—which name was without doubt less known to him than Horatius—had satisfied his unchaste lusts before mirrors: of a copyist who believed he was doing a meritorious work when he augmented the reports of Suetonius with this anecdote.

I am hopefully the first to propose this conjecture, although I am not the first to hold the passage it concerns to be interpolated. Dacier left it out silently in his translation, and thus silently condemned it. Baxter likewise leaves it out in his edition, and adds in a note: *quae hic omittuntur, a nescio quo nebulone infarcta sunt, neque enim solum inhonesta, verum etiam deridicula et ἀσυστατα videntur.* [what is omitted here was stuffed in by I know not what rascal, for it seems not only dishonest, but even laughable and inconsistent [*ásystata* / inconsistent]] It would be pleasing to me if I had rightly proven what Baxter says here with entirely dry words.

And indeed it should be pleasing to me already for the reason that the second kind of proofs that one takes of the unchastity of Horace from his own writings loses a great deal when it is no longer supported by the former.

Does one grant it, or does one not grant it, that the poet depicts nature; that sensory objects must not occupy him merely and alone, indeed not even primarily; that the feelings, just as they animate nature itself, must also animate his painting? One grants it. Does one concede, or does one not concede, that the feelings of voluptuousness [*Wollust*] are among all those which take possession of the most hearts? and take possession of them most[601] easily; that they are capable among themselves of the most variations, which are all voluptuousness, but each a different voluptuousness; that the poet, just as he can show his greatest strength here, has also his greatest fame to expect here? One concedes it. Therefore let one also concede that the poet may sing of wine and love, rest and laughter, sleep and dance, and praise them as the foremost goods of this life; or at least let one concede that if one wished to forbid it to the poet, one would forbid him one of the most beautiful fields where he could gather the most pleasant flowers for the human heart. I speak of the human heart as it is, and not as it ought to be; as it will eternally remain, and not as strict moralists [*Sittenlehrer*] would gladly reshape it.

I have already gained much for Horace if the poet may sing of love. But love—does it not have a different shape in every century? It has been noted that in chivalric times it was uncommonly modest, respectful, and chaste and constant to the point of enthusiasm; those were the times of the knights-errant. In the times, on the contrary, in which wit and taste had spread from the realm of the arts and sciences into the realm of morals, it was always bold, fickle, slippery, and even strayed a little out of the track of nature. Is it not, however, the duty of a poet to adopt the tone of his century? It is, and Horace could not possibly speak otherwise of love than according to the way of thinking of his contemporaries. – – Still more, then, gained for him.

To this let one add the remark that everything of which a poet makes his own affair touches far more than that which he only narrates. He must seem to have the feelings in himself that he wishes to arouse; he must seem to speak from experience and not from mere imagination [*Einbildungskraft*]. This, through

which he knows how to give his supple spirit all possible forms for a short time, and to put it into all passions, is precisely that which constitutes his advantage over other mortals; but it is at the same time[602] also that of which those to whom it is denied can form no concept at all. They cannot imagine to themselves how a poet can be angry without raging; how he can sigh from love without feeling it. They, who allow all passions to be awakened in themselves only through realities, know nothing of the secret of making them active through arbitrary representations. They resemble common sailors, who must arrange their course according to the wind, when the poet resembles an Aeneas, who carries the winds in sealed skins with him, and can arrange them according to his course. Nevertheless, to have their applause, he must place himself equal to them. Because they cannot speak fiery of love until they are in love, he himself must be in love to please them if he wishes to speak fiery of it. Because they do not know how grief over the loss of a beloved would express itself without having felt it, a Neaera herself must have become unfaithful to him when he wishes to depict nature and its outbursts on such an occasion.

Since one knows this, however, or at least could know it, is one not ashamed to write everything in earnest to the account of the poet which he himself, for the sake of the artistic illusion [*künstlichen Blendwerks*], wrote to it? Must he then have emptied all glasses and kissed all girls that he pretends to have emptied and kissed? Malice rules here as everywhere. Let him present the most magnificent moral maxims, the most sublime thoughts of God and virtue; one will well take care not to make his heart the source of them; all the beautiful things, say they, he says as a poet. But let the slightest offensive thing escape him, quickly the mouth shall have overflowed with that of which the heart is full.

Away then with all the unworthy applications that one has often enough made from the poems of Horace to his moral character! They are the greatest injustices that one can render him, and repeated all too often, they will finally move all his imitators to show us nature only on its stubborn side, and to banish all Graces from their songs.[603]

No one has driven these hateful applications further than several Frenchmen. And in what folly do the French not always carry off the prize? De la Chapelle found with his love stories of Catullus and Tibullus imitators, wretched writer though he

was. Yet have I already forgotten that it is precisely the most wretched writers who find the most imitators? Not one, but two true *beauxesprits* [wits / fine spirits]—that is, true shallow heads [*seichte Köpfe*]—have delivered *Les Amours d'Horace* [The Loves of Horace] to us. The one, in five letters to a Marquis—for a Marquis it must at least be with whom a French author stands in correspondence—knew how to bring all female names that occur in the poems of Horace into a whole. They are to him a series of willing sisters through whom the fickle Horace revelled. Already the sheer quantity of them could have made visible to him the absurdity of his undertaking; yet this very quantity he makes into a proof that Horace in gallantry must have been a hero without equal. He forces everywhere out of the words of the poet, which are often the most innocent in the world, small scandalous circumstances, in order to procure a kind of connection for his fictions. Horace, for example, accompanies Galatea, going to sea, with sincere wishes of friendship; of friendship, I say, which presents to her all the dangers of the raging ocean, and admonishes her through the example of Europa not to undertake an uncertain voyage. This is the content of the 27th Ode of the third Book. The most tender thing that Horace says therein to Galatea are the lines:

Sis licet felix ubicunque mavis, [*May you be happy, wherever you prefer to live,*]

Et memor nostri, Galatea, vivas. [*And live mindful of us, Galatea.*]

What can be more innocent than these lines? They seem to have flowed from the mouth of a brother who commends himself to a beloved sister who wishes to leave him. Yet what lies not within them, the Frenchman has placed inside; he translates the words *memor nostri vivas* [*live mindful of us*] by *daignez toujours*[*deign always*][604] *conserver le souvenir de ma tendresse* [*to preserve the memory of my tenderness*], and now it is clear that Galatea was a paramour [*Buhlerin*] of Horace. Still not enough; in defiance of all commentators who add to this ode, “one does not know who this Galatea was, much less whether Horace loved her”—in defiance of them, I say, he knows both. Galatea, he says, was a good little woman, just such as Horace, who had now soon served his time, needed. She preferred to lay down her arms right at the start rather

than occupy herself with the defense of a place which she saw beforehand would have to surrender anyway. Her passions were very fiery, and the violence of the same was to be read in all her features. Her mouth was as if withered from the frequent kisses she was accustomed to receive. All this made her right convenient for Horace; for him, who likewise sought to board [*entern*] as quickly as possible; only a pity that she promised herself somewhat more from him than cold assurances of his fidelity. She therefore soon let him notice that nothing but love moves a woman to love. To escape the persecutions of this worn-out lover, and what was the main thing, to place herself in safety from his songs, the customary instruments of his revenge, she resolved to leave Rome. She prepared to go to sea, perhaps on good luck to seek out her husband—

Is it permissible to invent such worthlessnesses [*Nichtswürdigkeiten*] that have not the very least foundation? Yet I will not linger over this writer. To have so little reverence toward the memory of a great poet that one does not shrink from darkening it through an absurd novel [*unsinnigen Roman*] is a proof of the most vulgar way of thinking [*pöbelhaftesten Art zu denken*] and of the most wretched taste. Suffice it that to everyone who will hold the odes against one another which Horace seems to have written to one and the same woman, according to the name, contradictions will leap to the eye that immediately betray the invented nature [*das Erdichtete*] of the subjects. Nothing more is needed to make of all his Lydias, Neraeas, Chloes, Leuconoes, Glyceras, and whatever they are all called, creatures of the imagination [*Wesen der Einbildung*]. Creatures of the imagination, for which I will in passing also declare my Phyllis and Laura and Corinna.——Will one not laugh that one sees me so anxious about my posthumous fame [*Nachruhm*]?

But do I want, then, to turn Horace into a priest of chastity? Nothing less than that. He may well have loved; if I only obtain so much for him that one may not use his odes against him, and not turn the plays of his wit into confessions of his heart. I press for this especially for the reason of acquitting him of the unnatural crime [*widernatürlichen Verbrechen*] of the voluptuaries of his time, and at least

striking the effeminate boys [*weichlichen Knaben*], Ligurinus and Lyciscus, from the roll of his paramours.

To make it probable that Horace enjoyed only permissible pleasure [*erlaubtre Vergnügen*], let one remember the zeal with which he punishes adultery. Let one read his sixth Ode of the third book. What a stanza!

Foecunda culpae secula nuptias [*Ages fertile in guilt first defiled marriage*]

Primum inquinavere, et genus et domus; [*and the race and the home;*]

Hoc fonte derivata clades [*derived from this source, disaster*]

In patriam populumque fluxit. [*streamed onto the fatherland and the people.*]

Could he depict the violation of the marital bond in more terrible colors than by making it the source from which all misfortune streamed over the Romans? Not enough that he pursued this vice; he even strived to make it ridiculous, in order to deter his Romans through its absurdity from that which the fear of punishment could not deter them. I appeal for this reason to his second Satire of the first book. Upon what does he press more than upon the sparing of matrons? He describes their enjoyment as uncertain, combined with less charm than the enjoyment of unattached paramours, and surrounded with a hundred dangers which one does not have to fear in the arms of a freedwoman.——Should he, then, who had so much reverence for social laws, have violated the far holier laws of nature? He knew her, this nature, and knew that she had set certain limits to our desires, to know which is one of the first duties.

Nonne cupidinibus statuit natura modum? quem [*Has not nature set a measure to desires? what*]

Quid latura sibi, quid sit dolitura negatum, [*she will tolerate for herself, and what she will grieve when denied,*]

Quaerere plus prodest, et inane abscindere soldo. [*it is more profitable to inquire, and to sever the void from the solid.*]

I cannot, indeed, conceal that in this very satire he speaks fairly indifferently of the use of boys; but how? In such a way that he simultaneously shows clearly that according to his taste, the most ordinary way is the dearest to him. It is true: he says:

tument tibi quum inguina, num, si [*when your groin swells, if*]

Ancilla aut verna est praesto puer, impetus in quem [*a maidservant or a home-born boy is at hand onto whom an assault*]

Continuo fiat, malis tentigine rumpi? [*can immediately be made, would you prefer to be burst with tension?*]

It is true he immediately adds: *non ego* [*not I*]. But he also closes his desire in the subsequent verses evidently only upon the former, so that through this confession he means to say nothing further than that he loves a *parabilem venerem facilemque* [*a ready and easy love*]. He continues:

Haec ubi supposuit dextro corpus mihi laevum, [*When this woman has placed her left body beneath my right,*]

Ilia et Egeria est; do nomen quodlibet illi. [*she is Ilia and Egeria; I give her whatever name I please.*]

I press upon the *haec* [*this woman*], and observe thereby further that Horace so loved nature that he would not tolerate even cosmetics [*Schmünke*] or high heels on this *haec* [*this woman*].

ut neque longa [*so that she wishes to seem neither taller*]

Nec magis alba velit, quam det natura, videri. [*nor whiter than nature grants.*]

Never will anyone be able to persuade me that one who follows nature in such trifles should have failed to recognize her in the most important matter of all. He who speaks of a vice that fashion has approved as he speaks of a fashion that one can join in or not, must not on that account have practiced this vice himself. He can condemn it in his heart without thereby wishing to swim against the stream.

However, lest I seem to linger merely over general excuses [*allgemeinen Entschuldigungen*], I will turn to one of the odes themselves that are said to prove his love of boys. I choose the first of the fourth book. It is addressed to Venus and was sung by the poet at an age of nearly fifty years. In it he begs the goddess not to wage war upon him anew, but rather to betake herself with all her charms to Maximus, who will not fail to erect a marble altar to her and let the sweetest incense rise to her during festive dances. For himself, it is no longer fitting in the friendly battle of cups to intertwine his hair with flowers and to hope all too trustingly for reciprocal love—Here the poet breaks off, and adds through a turn peculiar to him:

Sed cur heu, Ligurine, [*But why, alas, Ligurinus,*]

cur [*why*]

Manat rara meas lacryma [*does a rare tear trickle down my*]

per genas? [*cheeks?*]

Cur facunda parum decoro [*Why does my eloquent tongue fall mid-word*]

Inter verba cadit lingua [*into an unbecoming*]

silentio? [*silence?*]

Nocturnis te ego somniis [*In nightly dreams I now*]

Jam captum teneo, jam [*hold you captive, now*]

volucrem sequor [*I follow you fleeting*]

Te per gramina Martii [*you through the grass of the Campus*]

Campi, te per aquas, dure, volubiles. [*Martius, you through the rolling waters, hard one.*]

What can be imagined more tender than this passage? If only it did not concern a Ligurinus! Yet how if Ligurinus were nothing but a thought of the poet? What if it were to be nothing but an imitation of the Anacreontic Bathyllus? I will disclose what brings me to these conjectures. Horace says in the fourteenth ode of the fifth book [Epodes 14]:

Non aliter Samio dicunt arsisse Bathyllo [*Not otherwise do they say Teian Anacreon burned for Samian Bathyllus,*]

Anacreonta Teium [* *]

Qui persaepe cava testudine flevit amorem [*who very often wept his love upon the hollow tortoise-shell*]

Non elaboratum ad pedem. [*in an unelaborated meter.*]

Among the songs of Anacreon as we now have them, there are about three to Bathyllus, which are, however, of quite a different character than that the *flevit* [*he wept*] could belong to them. Those, therefore, must have been lost which

Horace had in mind here. But if one asks me what kind of idea one is to form of the same, I must say that I imagine them to myself completely like the cited passage of Horace regarding his Ligurinus. Impossible that the Greek could have wept his love out more happily! Or rather, impossible that the Roman could have wept it out so happily if he had not had the pattern of his master in tenderness before him. In a word, then: Horace, who borrowed the most beautiful flowers from all Greek lyric poets and knew how to transplant them with a happy hand onto Roman soil; Horace, I say, was so moved by the amorous tears of Anacreon that he resolved to make them his own. One cannot, indeed, as said, produce the song of the Greek against it; yet I ask connoisseurs [*Kenner*] who are able to distinguish the peculiar imagery of the one and the other poet whether they do not find sheer Anacreontic traits in the passage of Horace? Yes, certainly; and this all the more clearly since one can already point out similar features in the remaining songs of Anacreon. Let one remember, among others, the eighth, where the Teian in a dream chases about with beautiful girls as well as boys. Let one remember further the seventh, where Cupid with a hyacinth staff drives Anacreon before him through fields and thickets, through valleys and rivers. Sheer resembling fictions! And if Horace does not also owe these two lines:

Cur facunda parum decoro [*Why does my eloquent tongue fall mid-word*]

Inter verba cadit lingua silentio? [*into an unbecoming silence?*]

to Anacreon, he has at least copied them from Sappho, who long before him had made murky silence into a treacherous mark of love. Let one only compare them with the translation of Catullus:

– – – nihil est super mi [*nothing is left me*]

Quod loquar amens. [*for me to speak, insane.*]

Lingua sed torpet – – – [*But my tongue is numb*]

When, now, this imitation is correct, I have only to appeal further to a quite well-known observation. To this one, namely: that a true passion is much too restless to leave us time to imitate foreign sensations [*fremde Empfindungen*]. When one sings what one feels, one always sings it with original thoughts and turns. If, however, these are assumed, then their entire foundation is certainly also assumed. The poet then sat quietly in his room; he laboriously sought out the traits of beautiful nature from various pictures and made a whole out of them, of which he himself, out of a little ambition, assumes the role of subject. I betray here perhaps a secret upon which the gallant honor of so many witty heads depends; yet I will rather betray it than allow it to cause shameful conjectures by remaining unbetrayed.

But, one will perhaps object, could Horace not have imitated something nobler than the symptoms of so hideous a vice? And does not the very imitation of the same betray a pleasure in it? The first I grant, but the second I deny. He would have imitated something nobler in love if something nobler in it had been in fashion in his time. Had this been so, however, and had he imitated it—for example, all the deceptions of Platonic love—one could nevertheless conclude as little from it regarding his chastity as one is now authorized to conclude from the opposite regarding his unchastity.

Whoever, however, still does not find all this enough to acquit Horace of the love of boys, him I ask to remember further the following circumstances from the history of Augustus. I ask him to think of the law *de adulteriis et pudicitia* [*on adulteries and chastity*], and of the law *de maritandis ordinibus* [*on the marriage of the orders*]. How important this emperor made it to himself to restore their ancient force in order to prevent all excesses of debauchery that had crept in during the lawless times of the civil war. The former law, which was called *lex Julia* [*Julian law*], punished pederasty [*Knabenschänderei*] far more severely than an older law, *lex Scantinia* [*Scantinian law*], wished to see it punished. The second forbade this very vice insofar as it directly conflicted with the

multiplication of the human species, upon which a state was never more attentive than the Roman. One can read in Suetonius (Chapter 34) how much effort it cost Augustus to prevail with the renewal especially of the latter law, and how carefully he plugged all loopholes through which people sought to evade its obligation. Now one must either not have penetrated deeply into the nature of a courtier [*Hofmann*] who suppresses even his dearest passions as soon as he hopes thereby to please him from whom he expects all his fortune, or one must believe that Horace was a bad courtier if one wishes to hold him capable of having promoted through his own example the contempt of his emperor's dearest laws. His emperor, whom he himself, in more than one place, praises on account of these holy institutions:

Nullis polluitur casta domus stupris: [*The chaste house is polluted by no debaucheries:*]

Mos et lex maculosum edomuit nefas, [*Custom and law have conquered the spotted wickedness,*]

Laudantur simili prole puerperae: [*Childbearing women are praised for offspring resembling the father:*]

Culpam poena premit comes. [*Punishment presses close behind guilt as its companion.*]

All this, says Horace, are the advantages of the reign of our Augustus! But one understands him very poorly if one assumes the *maculosum nefas* [*spotted wickedness*] to be anything other than the vice of which we are speaking here. To this vice, too, punishment followed on the heels; *culpam poena premit comes* [*punishment presses close behind guilt as its companion*]. And Horace was nevertheless supposed to have committed it? I will not hope that people will wish to prove slanders with slanders, and place Augustus himself in the same damnation. It is true, as Suetonius reports, various shameful crimes were charged against him in his younger years. *Sex. Pompejus ut effoeminatum insectatus est; M. Antonius, adoptionem avunculi stupro meritum etc.* [*Sextus Pompey attacked

him as effeminate; Mark Antony asserted that he earned adoption by his uncle through shameful lust, etc.*] But were not Pompey and Antony his enemies? And does not Suetonius himself say shortly thereafter: *ex quibus sive criminibus sive maledictis infamiam impudicitiae facillime refutavit, et praesentis et posterae vitae castitate?* [*from which, whether charges or insults, he very easily refuted the infamy of unchastity by the chastity of his present and subsequent life?*] Adultery was the only thing from which even his friends could not clear him; they made it, however, not without probability, more into a state stratagem [*Staatslist*] than into a boundless lust. *Adulteria quidem exercuisse ne amici quidem negant: excusantes sane, non libidine sed ratione commissa; quo facilius consilia adversariorum per cujusque mulieres exquireret.* [*That he indeed practiced adulteries not even his friends deny: excusing it to be sure as committed not out of lust but out of reason, whereby he might more easily discover the plans of his adversaries through the women of each.*] One knows that a modern Augustus took this very path, which he did not, however, necessarily have to learn from history.

I do not know whether I still need to refute a meager subterfuge [*kahle Ausflucht*] here. One could say Horace made himself guilty of the love of boys before Augustus had renewed the laws against it. Yet have we not explicitly seen above that the poet was nearly fifty years old when he feigned being in love with Ligurinus? This point in time falls long after the former, and who knows what good spirit drove Horace to note it so precisely for his future vindication. Augustus had at that time long since banished the love of boys from the state through the sharpest laws; but to banish it from the songs of poets, who like to let no subject be withdrawn from them on which they can show their wit, had never been his will. He could know all too well that in verses there was only their shadow, which would do little damage to the human species.

When I now look back upon all that I have brought forward in the matter of unchastity for the salvation [*Rettung*] of my poet—although a little disorderly, as I, unfortunately, perceive——I believe at least to have arrived so far that one may conclude nothing from the substituted testimony, and from his own poems

even less than nothing. It remains rather with the judgment of Augustus: *purissimus penis!* [*a most pure penis!*] The latter, because he might indeed have enjoyed his share of fleshly delights; the former, however, because he remained entirely within the bounds of nature.——But enough of this!

I turn to a second accusation, which shames a Roman, insofar as he is a Roman, almost even more than the first. Horace is said to have been a faint-hearted fugitive [*feigherziger Flüchtling*] who was not ashamed to confess his shame himself. One knows that Horace, when he was in Athens to continue his studies, took service under the army of Brutus. The historical circumstances thereof are too well known for me to linger over them. One knows how disastrously the Battle of Philippi turned out for Brutus. It is this to which Horace reminds his friend, Pompeius Varus, in the seventh ode of the second book:

Tecum Philippos, et celerem fugam [*With you I experienced Philippi and the swift flight,*]

Sensi, relicta non bene parmula, [*my little shield left behind not well,*]

Cum fracta Virtus et minaces [*when virtue was broken and the threatening ones*]

Turpe solum tetigere mento. [*touched the foul soil with their chin.*]

What a confession! exclaim all who remember the disgrace that was connected among both the Greeks and the Romans with the loss of the shield——We shall see whether they need this exclamation!

I will not press that a soldier who lost his shield in battle could nevertheless have been perfectly brave; that he could have lost it for the very reason that he was all too brave. I will not cite that it is a folly to make flight heavy for oneself through an unnecessary load when one must take to it once and for all. All these excuses

might be too general, and thus excuse nothing; although I could bring the first to a very high degree of probability. Horace was a young man without ancestors and fortune, and yet right at the start he attained to the dignity of a tribune. Is it not clear, then, that Brutus must have discovered personal qualities in him that replaced the lack of ancestors and fortune? What could these qualities have been, however, if they were not a decisive courage and a superior capacity for the art of war? And does he not boast in this very ode himself that even before the Battle of Philippi he had risked his life more than once?

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[604] Daignez toujours, &c. *Poésies d'Horace trad. par M. Sanadon.* T. I. p. 338. [*Deign always, etc. Poems of Horace translated by Mr. Sanadon. Vol. I, p. 338.*]

O saepe mecum tempus in ultimum [*O often with me into the ultimate time*]

Deducte – – [*brought – –*]

Or does one wish to interpret this as a boastfulness in him, and believe him nowhere except where he seems to make known his shame?

However, as said, all these subterfuges are too petty for me. Even if Horace had otherwise been ever so brave, it would nevertheless redound too little to his honor if right upon the most important occasion his courage had deserted him. To venture something in small skirmishes, and to flee from a serious battle, is well suited for a hussar, but for no Roman. I am consequently very poorly satisfied with all his commentators, who know not how to excuse him through anything other than the superior power of Augustus; who make the confession of his flight, at the highest, into a delicate flattery, and thereby accept the circumstance of the cast-away shield as a certain truth.

It depends upon whether I shall hit the mark better. I remembered at the right time having read in Dio Cassius (Book 47) that the victors after the lost battle at Philippi indeed sharply pursued the fugitives; but that they killed nor took prisoner a single one, but merely scattered them as much as possible so that they could in no way resist——What, then, could occur to me more naturally than the thought that Horace, if he had really cast away his shield, must have cast it away entirely without cause. Could he not flee comfortably enough, then? He did not need to be quite so swift, after all, since neither death nor captivity were behind him. With this preconceived opinion I read the lines immediately following:

Sed me per hostes [*But me through the enemies*]

Mercurius celer [*swift Mercury*]

Denso paventem sustulit aëre. [*lifted trembling in a dense mist.*]

One does not need, I believe, to be the most sharp-witted to discover in these words the poet who wishes to be nothing less than an historian. Nor does one need to be the most read to know that Horace here imitated Homer, with whom it is indeed nothing rare that a god, in the midst of a battle, surrounds a encircled hero with a thick cloud, and in this manner snatches him from his enemies. But how if the preceding lines were also of this kind? How if one also found in those the traces of an imitation that had seduced the poet into saying more than he should have said according to the strict truth? Would it not follow from this that one must believe of the cast-away shield no more and no less than of the cloud in which Mercury is said to have enfolded him?

Let one remember, then, what Herodotus and Strabo report to us of Alcaeus, that lyric poet whom Horace had made into his foremost pattern. This Greek was so little a mere poet that he rather seemed to love poetry only for the reason that through it he could most emphatically declare his hatred against the oppressors of

the fatherland. He was the opponent of Pittacus, who seized the supreme power in Mytilene by force, and whom a couple of maxims, which are still fairly tolerable, have placed among the number of the Seven Sages. His misfortune willed that he not only fell into the hands of this his enemy, but also in an engagement which the Athenians won against those of Lesbos, had to save his life by flight and leave his weapons in the lurch. One knows that he did not keep silent about this circumstance in his own poems, and also did not need to keep silent about it, because he had already given too many proofs of his bravery for this accident to have been disadvantageous to him. The Athenians hung up his weapons in a temple of Pallas, and this too was a proof that one must not have regarded them as a poor spoil——Horace, to be sure, was not completely in this case; but what hinders us nevertheless from believing that Pompeius Varus, to whom he addresses the ode and whom he calls *primum suorum sodalium* [*the first of his companions*], could have been sufficiently convinced of the courage of Horace to regard the cast-away shield as nothing other than a poetic stroke [*poetischen Zug*]? For a stroke that was to give his friend an equality with that Greek with whom he wished to have as much similar as possible.

In short, the entire seventh ode of the second book is nothing but a joke [*Scherz*]. And what is more customary in a joke than that one gives oneself a completely different figure; that the brave man depicts himself as a coward, and the generous man as a miser! In these disguises lies only all too often a delicate self-praise [*feines Eigenlob*], from which perhaps Horace here, too, is not to be spoken free. Perhaps he was one of those who had held out most bravely at Philippi; perhaps he knew no more delicate and at the same time wiser way to mention his deeds than through the opposite. I say: no wiser way; because after that time, as a favorite of Augustus, it would have become him very poorly to boast of it so straight out. I therefore boldly appeal to the feeling of all poets, whether, if they had been in Horace’s place, they would have said something poor of themselves out of any other cause than to let something all the more glorious be understood beneath it?

What reinforces me even more in the conjecture that the cast-away shield is a poetic belittling of himself [*poetische Verkleinerung seiner selbst*] is the second passage where Horace makes mention of his military status. It is located in the second letter of the second book, and thus in a genre of poems that is far more capable of the truth of historical circumstances than an ode. But what does he say there of his flight? Nothing but:

Unde simul primum me dimisere Philippi [*Whence as soon as Philippi first dismissed me,*]

Decisis humilem pennis, inopemque paterni [*humbled with clipped wings, and destitute of paternal*]

Et laris et fundi: paupertas impulit audax [*hearth and estate: bold poverty impelled me*]

Ut versus facerem – – [*to make verses – –*]